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SARCOPHAGID LARVAE FROM THE PAINTED TURTLE

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In studying the blood of vertebrates in my course in histology during the past winter, I used a specimen of *Chrysemys picta,* the common painted turtle. In pulling the right hind leg back against the plastron before making the stab for blood, I noted that a hardened cylinder partly protruded from the thigh. When the object was completely extruded, it parted in the middle and five sarcophagid larvae were discovered.

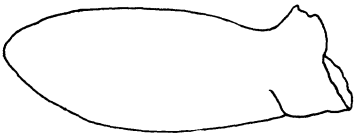

Figure 1

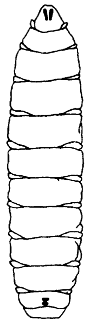

Figure 2

Fig. 1.—Horny case containing Sarcophagids.
Fig. 2.—Sarcophagid larva from the turtle. (Ventral aspect.)

The specimens were submitted to Dr. T. J. Headlee and to Dr. L. O. Howard. For information regarding the larvae, I am indebted to them and to Mr. C. H. Richardson, assistant state entomologist of New Jersey.

So-called bot-fly larvae have been reported by Packard (1882), True (1884), and Wheeler (1890). Wheeler corrected the previous writers and placed the larvae among the Sarcophagae. Most recently Kepner (1912) has described in detail larvae undoubtedly of the same species as my own specimens. There is no question that the tortoises are infested by sarcophagids and the reason for this brief note is found in the peculiar modification of the epidermis of the host which formed a case for the larvae.

This horny epidermal case (Fig. 1) was 15 mm. long, 5.5 mm. broad, and from 0.5 to 0.6 mm. thick. The outside was regular and smooth except at one point, where it was slightly indented. The mouth of the case was irregular and before being disturbed the object was scarcely discernible on the skin of the turtle. The hind leg was measured, and the thigh proved to be only 25 mm. in length and 13 mm. in diameter. The leg was completely paralyzed, and although the specimen was kept alive for a month after the case had been removed, use of the leg was not regained.

The larvae (Fig. 2) were kept alive for some days, then two were placed in moist earth in an attempt to secure pupation. The results were negative, however. The other specimens were turned over to the entomology department and one of them was sent to the department of agriculture for identification. So far as the writer knows no imagoes other than the four females secured by Wheeler have been bred from the turtle-infesting sarcophagid.

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